

With help from Rep. Gutierrez, Dream of Citizenship and Voting Finally Fulfilled for Mexican Immigrant

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(Chicago) – Ignacia Moya is one of the oldest and newest Americans. Today, at a ceremony in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, Mrs. Moya, age 106, raised her right hand and swore the oath of citizenship and became a U.S. citizen. The event was sponsored by Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) who helped Mrs. Moya -- and several members of the Moya family -- through the citizenship process. It was also attended by local elected officials, including Alderman Daniel Solis, Alderman Ricardo Munoz, Cook County Commissioner-Elect Jesus Garcia, and by officials from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service.

"She told me she wanted to vote and that she needed our help to navigate the immigration and citizenship process, so that's when my office stepped in," said Rep. Gutierrez, whose office was in touch with USCIS to keep the application moving through the bureaucracy. "It was her sincere wish that she be able to vote in the nation she adopted more than 30 years ago and that makes me very proud of my country."

Mrs. Moya is originally from Mexico and has lived in the U.S. since the 1970s. She had

previously applied for citizenship in 1986, but her English-language skills prevented her from passing the examinations. Now, with failing eyesight and hearing, she was granted a special waiver at Congressman Gutierrez' request and completed the final interview with USCIS officials on Friday. She also recently received certification from the Chicago Police Department that she has been crime free for at least the last five years.

"She wanted it and you really have to want citizenship to get it these days," said Rep. Gutierrez. "The paper work, the fees, the unresponsive bureaucracy, these all discourage immigrants from applying, but their determination to become Americans wins out in the end."

According to USCIS, Mrs. Moya is not the oldest person to have ever been sworn in (that honor goes to a woman, 117, originally from Turkey, sworn in in 1997). But she is the oldest person to go through Rep. Gutierrez' citizenship program, which has helped 50,000 immigrants apply for citizenship since the Congressman took office in 1993.

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